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Bulletin

Title: Official Travel File and Receipt Requirement

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Financial Management and Agreements Division/AFM/ARS

This Replaces: Bulletin 09-304 dated April 9, 2009

Distribution: All REE Employees

This Bulletin continues the receipt requirements established under Bulletin 09-304. No changes have been made to the requirements.

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Purpose

This bulletin serves to continue the receipt requirements established in Bulletin 09-304.

Background

In March 2008, the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) agencies started using GovTrip to support the temporary duty travel process, which includes planning and authorizing travel, making reservations, delivering electronic tickets, calculating and approving reimbursements, and archiving data. GovTrip is a web-based system; a key component of GovTrip is the ability to maintain files electronically. GovTrip provides the capability to upload receipts and special authorization letters and attach them to the electronic file.

The electronic GovTrip file is the official file for temporary duty travel. Paper files containing hard copies of the authorization and voucher should no longer be maintained by the employee's travel or administrative office. ALL originals should be returned to the traveler. Audit of travel, which used to be performed by submitting documents, including receipts, to the Controller of Operations Division (COD), National Finance Center (NFC), will now be completed electronically by statistical sampling.

REE will continue with the \$35 receipt threshold. This step is necessary in current environment of restricted budgets, increased accountability and transparency, and the significant overview of travel costs, conference costs, and audit of travel vouchers. REE policy requires receipts for lodging, contract common carrier tickets, and any other expense of \$35 or greater. We suggest that employees obtain and maintain receipts for all claimed travel costs to ensure the accuracy of their travel voucher, but receipts will be required for expenses of \$35 or greater.

Policy

Receipts must be submitted for any individual temporary duty (TDY) travel expense of **\$35 or greater**, including but not limited to, shuttle or taxi, rental car, tolls, and parking. Receipts are always required, regardless of amount, for lodging and contracted common carrier transportation. Meals do not generally require receipts. Approving officials may require additional receipts provided the requirement is stated in writing on the travel authorization in advance of travel.

Note: This receipt requirement is for TDY travel only. Reimbursement for any local travel expense must be supported by a receipt, regardless of dollar value, unless obtaining a receipt for local travel is impractical, such as metered parking or mileage reimbursement. For local travel reimbursement see P&P344-Local Travel Policy.

The GovTrip electronic record is the official file for all temporary duty travel. Travelers or travel arrangers who access GovTrip must upload all supporting documentation, including receipts to the electronic file. Supporting documents include:

- Authorizations signed by the approving official if the approving official has delegated the document stamping process to an administrative assistant.

- Vouchers signed by the traveler if the voucher is prepared by a travel arranger instead of the traveler. The uploaded voucher must also be signed by the approving official if that person has delegated the stamping process to an administrative assistant.
- Letters of approval for special items, such as actual expense or the use of premium-class accommodations.
- Receipts for contract common carrier tickets (i.e., airline, train, bus tickets), lodging, and any other individual expense of \$35 or greater.

Approving officials must view and ensure that all mandatory documents and receipts are attached to the electronic file. In the case of missing receipts, a detailed explanation must be uploaded to GovTrip. Every effort should be made to obtain required receipts; mere inconvenience in the matter of obtaining receipts will not be considered a suitable justification. Travel vouchers should be stamped “returned” for correction if this requirement is not met.

Travelers (including Invitational Travelers) must maintain their receipts in accordance with Federal Travel Regulations standards (six years and three months) in case a receipt is requested as a result of an audit.

Most audits will be performed electronically, with COD/NFC examining the uploaded documents and/or receipts. On occasion, an original receipt may be requested of the employee if a required receipt is not attached to the file, an attached receipt is not legible, the attached receipt does not support the expense claimed, or if there is suspicion that a receipt may have been altered. In most cases, the audit of the travel file will occur when the voucher is filed and prior to scheduling for payment. All payment documents are subject to future audit for varying reasons, making it necessary for employees to maintain their original receipts.

Responsibilities

Traveler

- Obtain an approved travel authorization in advance of travel.
- Be a prudent traveler.
- Obtain all required receipts.
- Submit a completed voucher package within 5 (five) business days of trip end date.
- Maintain all vouchers and original receipts and documentation for at least 6 years 3 months.

Travel Arranger

- Ensure traveler receives an electronic copy of approved travel authorization including any notes regarding specific requirements (including actual expenses, increased receipt requirement, etc.).
- Upload all required documentation and receipts, and ensure uploads are legible.
- Enter and stamp the voucher within 3 business days of receipt of a complete voucher package from the traveler.
- Ensure a voucher signed by the traveler is uploaded to the travel system.

Travel Approver

- Ensure that any specific additional requirements are included in the travel authorization.
- Ensure that the travel is necessary and in the best interest of the Government and that travel arrangements are prudent.
- Review submitted vouchers for accuracy, including the presence of required receipts.
- Return inaccurate or incomplete vouchers to the traveler for correction.
- Approve submitted, accurate vouchers within five business days of receipt of a complete package.

Authorities

41 CFR, Chapter 301-50

5 U.S.C. 5707

40 U.S.C. 121(c)

31 U.S.C. 3528

Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)

Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR)

/s/ Sherri L. Carroll

SHERRI L. CARROLL

Deputy Director

Financial Management and Agreements Division